BARYONS

DECISION RIGHTS

AN EXECUTIVE BRIEF FOR OWNERS AND PRESIDENTS OF GROWING COMPANIES

Decision rights in growing companies

Turning framework language into local action, so managers can settle routine trade-offs without sending them back to the owner.

Decision rights | Frameworks | Escalation

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Shared language, local decisions.

Many growing companies adopt an operating or leadership framework to give everyone a shared language. The framework is most useful when managers can turn that language into consistent local decisions, without reflexively sending routine trade-offs back to the owner. Most of those trade-offs need a clear rule rather than the owner's time.

19%

OF U.S. EMPLOYEES STRONGLY AGREED SENIOR LEADERS SET CLEAR PRIORITIES (AUG 2026)[1]

75%

OF HR LEADERS SAY MANAGERS ARE OVERWHELMED BY THE EXPANSION OF THEIR RESPONSIBILITIES (2024)[2]

Gallup's August 2026 U.S. employee data found only 19% strongly agreed that senior leaders set clear priorities for their organization.[1] That figure covers employees in general, not smaller companies or framework users, and it does not say why. In an owner-led company it points at a familiar distance: the owner knows exactly what a priority means, and the people doing the work have to infer it. That gap is normal.

A framework supplies the vocabulary: priorities, owners, scorecards and meetings. It rarely says what a manager may decide alone, what needs a quick clarification and what truly belongs with the owner. When those boundaries are unstated, the safest move for a careful manager is to ask. Clear boundaries let managers settle routine trade-offs and keep the owner for the decisions that need one.

WHAT THIS BRIEF COVERS

1. **Why decisions travel upward.** The mechanism, and why it appears.
2. **A hypothetical example.** One priority, three people, three readings.
3. **The three-person priority check.** Usable this week, with any framework.
4. **Where Baryons fits.** What it adds alongside a framework, and its limits.

A QUESTION TO TAKE INTO THE NEXT LEADERSHIP MEETING

Which decision came back to you this month that a clear rule would have kept local?

Why decisions keep returning to the owner

Autonomy without context becomes guesswork. Escalation without boundaries sends every choice back to the top.

In an owner-led company, the owner's judgment is the original decision rule. A framework spreads the language of that judgment, though not always the rule itself. Managers learn the words for a priority without learning which trade-offs it allows. The rule stays in the owner's head, where it is easy to apply and hard to share.

WHERE DECISION RIGHTS BLUR

- **Done is pictured differently.** The owner, a manager and the person doing the work each picture a slightly different finished result.
- **Approval limits are unstated.** Managers do not know which decisions they can make without approval, so they ask about most of them.
- **Escalation has no trigger.** Routine trade-offs travel up alongside the ones that change cost, customer promises or risk.
- **The owner answers case by case.** Quick answers keep work moving, but each one settles a single case rather than setting a rule.

WHY IT HAPPENS IN WELL-RUN COMPANIES

Owners of growing companies are usually close to the work and quick to help. Asking them is fast and safe. That responsiveness built the company, and it also teaches managers that the owner is where trade-offs get settled.

WHAT THE RESEARCH SAYS

A meta-analysis of team cognition found that shared understanding of the work explains differences in team performance beyond motivation and behavior.[3]

Gartner found 75% of HR leaders say managers are overwhelmed by the expansion of their responsibilities.[2] The survey covers organizations of many sizes, mostly larger than a typical owner-led company. In a smaller business the pressure shows up differently: managers carrying more work have less room to guess at an unstated rule, so they send the question up to the owner instead. Each question is small. Together they can fill an owner's week without anyone deciding they should.

A useful rule: decide locally when the outcome and guardrails are clear; escalate when a trade-off changes cost, customer promises or risk.

03 · HYPOTHETICAL EXAMPLE

One priority, three readings

HYPOTHETICAL EXAMPLE. NOT A BARYONS CUSTOMER.

Priority: on-time delivery for every key account

An 80-person specialty manufacturer uses a well-known operating framework. The owner sets a quarterly priority: on-time delivery for every key account.

The plant manager reads done as every order shipped on schedule. The sales manager reads it as key accounts first, even if smaller orders slip. A scheduler, unsure which reading applies, asks the owner about each conflicting order.

The owner answers each one within minutes, about a dozen times a week. Each answer is correct. None of them becomes a rule the scheduler can use next time.

What the example shows. The framework gave everyone the same words. What was missing was one sentence on what done means and which conflicts the scheduler could settle alone. Writing it down takes minutes. Answering the same question every week takes much longer.

04 · EXECUTIVE CHECKS

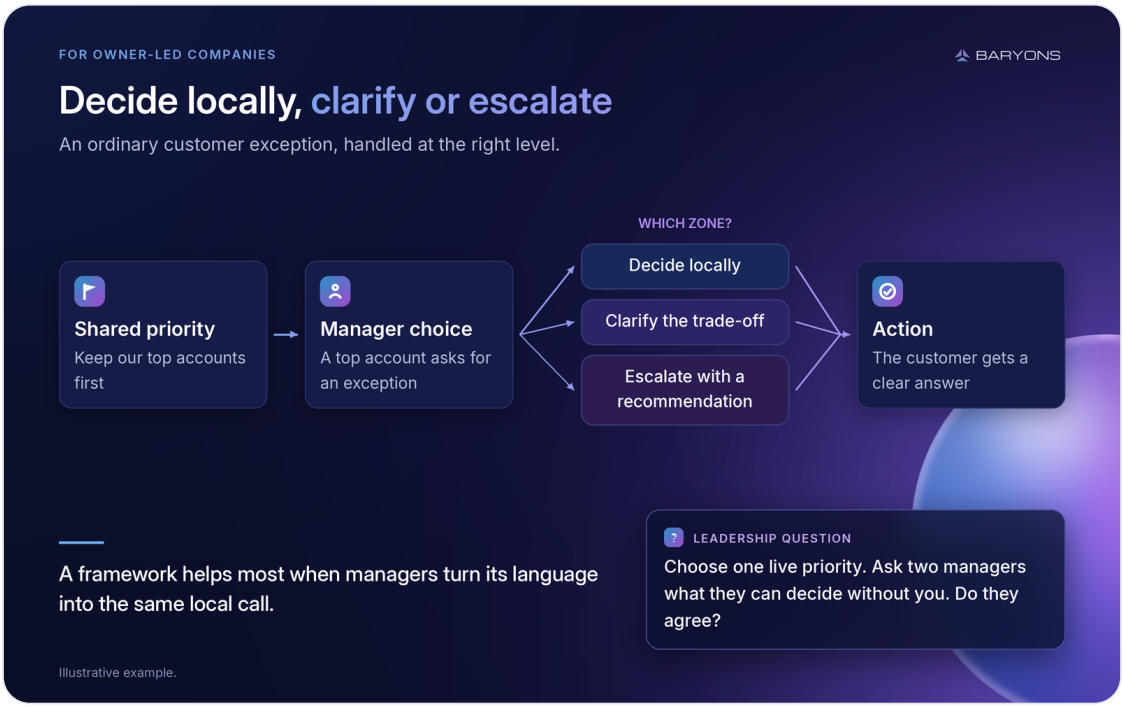
The three-person priority check

Pick one live priority. Ask yourself, a manager and the person delivering the work, separately. If the answers differ, agree on one sentence the team can use this week.

1. **What does done look like?** Different pictures of done lead to different trade-offs, even under the same priority, and each looks reasonable from inside its team.
2. **What decision can you make without approval?** Compare each answer with what you would actually allow. Most gaps run in the cautious direction.
3. **When should you escalate?** If the trigger is unclear, routine trade-offs will keep coming back to you along with the important ones.
4. **What is the one-sentence rule?** Write the clearest difference as decide, clarify or escalate, share it with the team, and check it again next week.

What Baryons contributes alongside your framework

Baryons complements the operating framework you use. It does not replace it, connect to it or change how its meetings run, and it does not need access to email, meetings or task systems.



Decide locally, clarify or escalate. Illustrative.

- **Private guidance for each person.** People get private guidance grounded in approved company priorities, in conversations of a few minutes by phone or web, to work a call through before making it. Each person's conversation stays theirs.
- **Built for ownership.** Organizations work best when people own their work and trust their own judgment. Baryons is designed around those two conditions, which research ties closely to motivation and performance.
- **Aggregate signal for the owner.** Each week, Team Resonance returns the patterns across a team, with no names in any section, so an owner can see which rules need stating. Leaders receive patterns, never individual conversations.
- **No new system.** No new meeting and no integration project. Deployment is a participant list and a phone number.

What this brief does not claim

- The Gallup and Gartner figures describe broad workplace research. They are not specific to smaller companies and do not show that any one company has this gap.
- The example is hypothetical. It is not a Baryons customer, and its details are invented to show the mechanism.
- Research on shared understanding shows a link with team performance. It does not show that any one practice or tool will change results in a given company.
- Baryons is independent of every framework and its owners. Leaders never receive individual scores or conversations.

A NEXT STEP

Pick one live priority.

Ask the three questions this week, separately. The check works with any framework, including one of your own. If the answers line up, you have your confirmation. If they do not, and a focused discussion about that one priority would be useful, we would be glad to have it at baryons.com.

SOURCES

References

1 **Leadership & Management (indicator, U.S. employee data as of August 2026).** Gallup, accessed November 2026. https://www.gallup.com/404252/indicator-leadership-management.aspx

2 **Gartner Survey Finds Leader and Manager Development Tops HR Leaders' List of 2025 Priorities for Third Consecutive Year.** Gartner, press release (survey of HR leaders, July 2024), October 15, 2024. https://www.gartner.com/en/newsroom/press-releases/2024-10-15-gartner-survey-finds-leader-and-manager-development-tops-hrleaders-list

3 DeChurch, L. A., and Mesmer-Magnus, J. R.. **The cognitive underpinnings of effective teamwork: a meta-analysis.** Journal of Applied Psychology, 95(1), 32-53, 2010. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0017328

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